

# Food Sovereignty: Growing a Vibrant Local Food System Town-by-Town



"We declare the right of communities to produce, process, sell and purchase local foods. In recognition of Vermont's traditional agricultural systems, we assert these vital principles as the foundation of local Food Sovereignty."



## **What is Food Sovereignty?**

Food Sovereignty is about embracing the traditions of our rural heritage and growing the vibrant local food system that has existed in Vermont for hundreds of years. Food Sovereignty is a rejection of the industry-controlled system of agriculture that has made us largely reliant on corporations whose loyalties are to shareholders rather than local communities. Food Sovereignty is restoring balance to our agricultural system and developing solidarity and unity between farmers and communities. Food Sovereignty is reclaiming our rural heritage and declaring the right of communities to produce, process, sell and purchase local foods.

## **Why is Food Sovereignty important?**

- As corporate control and burdensome regulations tighten their grip, Vermont towns must pass community level resolutions that will embrace our rural heritage and support a strong agricultural economy.
- In economically difficult times, it is increasingly important that our dollars stay local so that they can circulate in our community and provide a buffer against the negative influence of a struggling national and international economy.

## **Why my community?**

- By supporting the direct sale of local food, we can rebuild a local agricultural system that will put money in the pockets of farmers and support self-reliant communities.
- This effort is part of a town-by-town strategy to raise awareness and connect communities that support vibrant local food systems.

## **Why Rural Vermont?**

Over the last twenty-six years, Rural Vermont has been advocating locally, statewide, and nationally to ensure that agricultural policy strengthens family farms, sustains rural communities, and promotes a vibrant local food system. Rural Vermont's vision is for a Vermont local food system which is self-reliant and based on reverence for the earth. It builds living soils which nurture animals and people with wholesome natural products, supporting healthy, thriving farms and communities. These communities in turn work to encourage and support current and future farmers, continuing our Vermont heritage. This abundant and generous way of life celebrates our diversity and interdependence.

Although we have achieved success at the state level, we believe that fundamental change, like agriculture, is grown from the bottom up. While laws may be signed in the Governor's ceremonial office in Montpelier, real change only comes about through community level grassroots action. It is for this reason that we have embarked on an ambitious town-by-town campaign to declare Food Sovereignty one community at a time.

**Rural Vermont:** Celebrating 25 years of advancing economic justice for Vermont farmers through advocacy and education.

While corporate control and complex regulatory schemes have driven large swaths of the local food community underground, we believe that a community-based, Town Meeting Campaign can restore the traditions of our rural heritage and once again bring to the forefront a vibrant local food system.

### **Maine's Local Food and Community Self-governance Ordinance**

This past March, Sedgwick, Maine and several other coastal Maine towns passed Local Food and Community Self Governance ordinances declaring the restoration of their community's right to sell, purchase and consume foods produced and distributed within their community. Facing similar issues in Vermont, Rural Vermont invited Farmer Activist of Sedgwick, Maine, Bob St. Peter to the 2011 Annual Meeting to address the issue of local food and local rules. Contact Rural Vermont at (802) 223-7222 to obtain a video of the talk or call your local community access channel to broadcast it locally.

### **What's the Difference between a Resolution and an Ordinance?**

A resolution is a statement that, if passed by a community, signifies that the community in which it was passed supports the particular statement made by the resolution. In this instance, if a community were to pass a Food Sovereignty resolution on Town Meeting Day, it would indicate that the citizens of the town support the right of their community to produce, process, sell and purchase local foods.

There is also the possibility of trying to pass a local ordinance or by-laws. Ordinances differ from resolutions in that they are legally binding on the municipality. Ordinances are more difficult to pass than resolutions because they require action by your local selectboard. If you feel there is a possibility that your local selectboard would be interested in adopting an ordinance, please contact Rural Vermont directly and we can help you develop that effort.

We realize that each community will petition for an article that best reflects the history and culture of that community. And while there is no "right" way to draft a resolution, there are ways to frame the language so that it is clear and concise. As such, we have included a few samples to use as starting points. Please contact Rural Vermont if you would like any assistance in drafting a resolution for your community's Town Meeting.

### **Steps you can do to pass a Town Meeting Day Resolution or Article**

- Recruit several people to assist with your campaign, and draft a resolution that reflects the history, culture, and desires of your town.
- Get your resolution on the Town Meeting Day ballot by collecting the appropriate amount of signatures and delivering them to the Town Clerk.
- Encourage people in your town to sign up for Rural Vermont's mailing list so that they will be kept informed and involved in the larger, state-wide campaign to bring Food Sovereignty to Vermont.
- Attend a Rural Vermont town-by-town Action Workshop to learn about how to get your town to vote YES on March 6th.
- Educate your community about the resolution, maintain an ongoing dialogue with the community, and encourage YES votes.



**CALL RURAL VERMONT 802-223-7222 to Organize Your Town TODAY!!!**

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